

**CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM**  
**maintained by the**  
**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**and supported by the**  
**CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP**  
**Database Version 8.1 (2005)**

---

B699 Barred Owl *Strix varia*

Family: Strigidae Order: Strigiformes Class: Aves

Written by: T. Kucera

#### DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

The barred owl has recently expanded its range into California (Dark et al. 1988). Its original distribution included eastern North America from south of the boreal forest to south-central Mexico (Johnsgard 1988). The first confirmed detections of barred owls in California occurred in Del Norte and Trinity counties in 1981 (Evans and LeValley 1982). Subsequent sightings have occurred from Sonoma County north to Del Norte County, and east to Modoc and Nevada counties (Dark et al. 1998). The first breeding by barred owls in California was reported in 1991 (Dark et al. 1998).

#### SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

**Feeding:** Hunts from perches or hovers and pounces on prey in coniferous and mixed-deciduous forests; feeds especially on small mammals such as mice, squirrels, and hares. May hunt in the daytime (Ehrlich et al 1988).

**Cover:** Forests of a variety of types, including redwood, Douglas-fir, and mixed conifer, provide cover.

**Reproduction:** Nests in tree cavities or in abandoned nests of hawks, crows, or squirrels (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Water:** Drinks and bathes (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Pattern:** New colonizer of a variety of habitats in both undisturbed and disturbed conditions.

#### SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

**Activity Patterns:** Active at night, and may be active during the day.

**Seasonal Movements/Migration:** Not known.

**Home Range:** Not known.

**Territory:** Probably territorial, but not well studied in California yet.

**Reproduction:** Not well known. In other areas, barred owls lay one brood of two to four eggs during early spring in a tree cavity or abandoned hawk, crow, or squirrel nest. The male feeds the incubating female (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

**Niche:** Concern that the recent expansion of barred owl range into California and the Pacific Northwest will have a negative impact on the northern spotted owl (*S. occidentalis*) due to dominance relations, predation, and hybridization (Dark et al. 1988).

## REFERENCES

- Dark, S., R. J. Gutierrez, and G. I. Gould. 1998. The barred owl (*Strix varia*) invasion in California. *The Auk* 115:50-56.
- Ehrlich, P. R., D. S. Dobkin, and D. Wheye. 1988. *The birder's handbook*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Evans, J. and R. LeValley. 1982. Middle Coast region. *American Birds* 36:890.
- Johnsgard, P. A. 1988. *North American owls: Biology and natural history*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D. C.